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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005642

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2016

TAGS: PREF PTER PREL TU IZ

SUBJECT: MAKHMOUR: TURKEY IMPATIENTLY AWAITS IRAQI
RESPONSE, MAY SEEK AMENDMENTS TO TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT

REF: A. ANKARA 3103 AND PREVIOUS

1B. BAGHDAD 3046 AND PREVIOUS
1C. GENEVA 1385

Classified By: A/PolCouns Kelly Degnan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Turkish MFA is pleased with UNHCR's revised operations plan for Makhmour, but frustrated that the Iraqi Government has yet to agree to provide security at the camp and that President Talabani has yet to respond to UNHCR on the issue. The GOT will propose changes to the tripartite agreement on Makhmour, but wants to discuss these with UNHCR (and the U.S.) before approaching the Iraqis; Turkey will not even propose these changes until the Iraqis come through on the security issue. UNHCR is looking for ways to continue funding the camp through next year. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) We called on MFA Director General for Security Affairs (S/CT-equivalent) Hayati Guven Sept. 22 to follow up on the Makhmour issue (refs). Guven responded that he had reviewed UNHCR's revised operations plan and was pleased that the new document took nearly all of his previous concerns into account (ref c). He added that during the previous week UNHCR's Director for Western and Central Europe, Pirkko Korula, had visited Ankara and met with him on Makhmour. Korula reportedly briefed Guven on UNHCR's recent meetings with Iraqi officials, noting that:

--The Iraqis are favorably inclined toward the tripartite agreement, but have made no commitments on it or on providing the required security for UNHCR to do its work;

--President Talabani has not responded to the High Commissioner's June 1 letter on Makhmour; and

--Kurdish officials are unenthusiastic about allowing refugees to resettle in their region.

13. (C) Guven emphasized that Turkey was still waiting for a firm commitment from the Iraqis to provide security for UNHCR's survey and repatriation work to commence. He expressed annoyance that President Talabani had not yet responded to UNHCR's letter, and questioned whether the GOI

was taking the issue seriously. We reminded Guven that both UNHCR and Embassy Baghdad had followed up repeatedly with the GOI on the issue, and that Iraqi officials appeared to be engaged and serious.

¶4. (C) Guven told us that following his June 1 meeting in Geneva with UNHCR and U.S. officials on Makhmour, he had circulated the tripartite agreement within the Turkish interagency and urged that the GOT affirm its acceptance of the current text. Unfortunately, both MFA's and TGS's legal departments had responded that some provisions of the agreement -- such as the deferral of military service for returning refugees -- go beyond existing Turkish law. Thus the agreement would either need to be amended or approved by the Turkish parliament. Guven urged against the latter alternative, as it would politicize an already difficult issue. (COMMENT: We agree. END COMMENT.) Guven said he told Korula that Turkey stands ready to meet with UNHCR to discuss changes to the text. Guven would welcome U.S. attendance at such a meeting but requested that UNHCR and the GOT agree to any changes before raising this with the Iraqis.

¶5. (C) Guven did not provide further details on other GOT-proposed changes to the text, adding that he would not engage in meaningful discussions on the tripartite agreement until the GOI agrees to provide the required security. "There is no rush," he added, noting that impending winter weather in southeast Turkey will mean that there can be no returnees until 2007.

¶6. (C) We also met with UNHCR's Turkey Representative, Gesche Karrenbrock, on Sept. 19. She asked if the USG would be able to continue funding for Makhmour despite the determination

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that the humanitarian nature of the camp has been compromised. (We subsequently learned from PRM that this is not an option.) She also asked if the USG could provide approximately \$50,000 to keep its office in Silopi (on the Iraq-Turkey border) open; UNHCR will engage Mission Geneva on this issue. UNHCR will use this office to process Makhmour returnees if and when this process can get started.

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